

REMARKS

Phone Interview

The applicant's attorney, John Wright, would like to thank the Examiner for the courtesies extended during a phone interview conducted on May 21, 2002. During the interview, the Examiner agreed that the final rejection was premature, thus preventing the attorney from having a fair opportunity to respond, and further agreed that an amendment would be entered. Further, it was acknowledged by the Examiner that claim 1, as originally written, appears to be in condition for allowance. Lastly, it was acknowledged by the Examiner that an amendment further distinguishing claim 13 over Flask et al. would place claim 13 in condition for allowance, for which the applicant and the applicant's attorney acknowledges with appreciation.

§ 103 Rejection, Claims 1-10, 12, and 13-17

Per the Examiner's request during the interview, the applicant submits below the contents of claim 1 and distinguishes claim 1 over Flask et al. (5,958,011). In addition, the applicant maintains the positions taken in the first amendment, dated October 23, 2001, that distinguishes the applicant's arrangement defined by claim 1 over Flask et al.

In Claim 1, a connector assembly 10 has a slide mechanism 18 having an arm 24 with a lock rail 88 and a bayonet slot 78 in the arm. The first connector body 12 has a mounting slot 56 and a channel 20 for releasably receiving the arm of the slide mechanism 18. A second connector body 14 has a mounting tab 94 to be releasably received in the mounting slot 56 of the first connector body 12 to connect the first connector body 12 and second connector body 14 together. The second connector body 14 also has a lock tab 100 which in assembly cooperates with the lock rail 88 and engages the lock rail to prevent separation of the second connector body 14 and first connector body 12. A third connector body 16 has a bayonet 112 to be received in the bayonet slot 78 of the slide mechanism 18 so that the third connector body 16 is releasably connected to the first connector body 12 when the arm of the slide mechanism 18 is disposed in the channel 20 of the first connector body 12. Claim 1 therefore has three connector bodies 12, 14 and 16 connected to one another through the assistance of a slide mechanism 18.

Where as the applicant's first connector body has a mounting slot for receiving a mounting tab on the second connector body, the first connector body 34 in Flask et al., as identified by the Examiner, does not have a mounting slot, nor does the second connector body 10, as identified by the Examiner, have a mounting tab. Further, whereas the applicant's second connector body has a lock tab which engages a lock rail to prevent the separation of the second connector body from the first connector body, the second connector body 10 in Flask et al. does not have a lock tab, nor does the slide mechanism 12 have a lock rail for engaging a lock tab to prevent the separation of the first connector body 34 from the second connector body 10.

Therefore, the applicant asserts that claim 1 is distinguishable and non-obvious over Flask et al., and therefore defines patentable subject matter and to be in proper form for allowance, as agreed to by the Examiner during the interview. Such action is respectfully requested.

Claims 2-10, and 12

Each of claims 2-10, and 12 is ultimately dependent on claim 1, and hence defines patentable subject matter and to be in proper form for allowance for at least the foregoing reasons, and such action is respectfully requested.

Claims 9, 10 and 12

Aside from their being dependant on claim 1, each of claims 9, 10 and 12 defines patentable subject matter and is in proper form for allowance for similar reasoning put forth in showing that claim 1 is in condition for allowance, and for the reasons further stated in the first amendment dated October 23, 2001, and such action is respectfully requested.

Claim 13

Claim 13 has been amended to further distinguish the applicant's claimed construction over Flask et al. As amended in claim 13, a connector assembly 10 comprises a first connector body 12 having a channel 20 and a mounting slot 56 extending outwardly from an external wall of the first connector body. A second connector body 14 has a lock tab 100 and a mounting tab 94 constructed to be releasably received in the mounting slot 56 of the first connector body to connect the first connector

body 12 and the second connector body 14 together. A slide mechanism 18 having a preliminary lock position and a final lock position has an arm 24 with a bayonet slot 78 for receiving a third connector body 16 constructed to be slideably, releasably received in the channel 20 and a lock rail 88 separate from the bayonet slot 78 and extending outwardly from the arm 24 which engages the lock tab 100 to prevent separation of the second connector body 14 and the first connector body 12 when the slide mechanism 18 is in the final lock position.

Whereas the applicant's first connector body has a mounting slot extending outwardly from an external wall for releasably receiving a mounting tab on a second connector body, Flask et al. shows no such construction. Additionally, the applicant's slide mechanism has a lock rail extending outwardly from an arm of the slide mechanism that is separate from a bayonet slot. The bayonet slot is constructed to receive a third connector body, while the lock rail is constructed for engaging the lock tab on the second connector body to prevent separation of the second connector body from the first connector body when the slide mechanism is in a final lock position. Flask et al. does not show or suggest a lock rail on a slide mechanism, let alone a lock rail for engaging a lock tab to prevent separation of a second connector body from a first connector body.

Accordingly, claim 13, as amended, is believed to define patentable subject matter and to be in proper form for allowance, and such action is respectfully requested.

Claims 14 -17

Each of claims 14 -17 is ultimately dependent on claim 13, and hence defines patentable subject matter and is in proper form for allowance for at least the foregoing reasons, and such action is respectfully requested.

Claims 16 and 17

Aside from their being dependant on claim 13, each of claims 16 and 17 is believed to define patentable subject matter and to be in proper form for allowance for similar reasoning put forth in showing that claims 1 and 13 are in condition for allowance, and for the further reasons stated in the first amendment dated October 23, 2001, and such action is respectfully requested.

It is believed that this application is now in condition for allowance. Such action is respectfully requested.

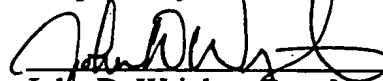
Summary

A marked-up copy of the claim amendments is attached to facilitate examination. Additions are underlined and deletions are bracketed.

If the Examiner has any questions or remarks in regard to this amendment, please contact Attorney John Wright at (248) 689-3500.

If it is determined that any fees are due, the Commissioner is hereby authorized and respectfully requested to charge such fees to Deposit Account No. 50-0831.

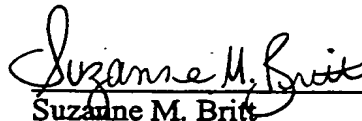
Respectfully submitted,



John D. Wright Reg. No. 49,095
Rising, Ethington, Barnes, Kisselle,
Learman & McCulloch, P.C.
P.O. Box 4390
Troy, Michigan 48099
(248) 689-3500

CERTIFICATE OF MAILING

I hereby certify that this correspondence is, on the date shown below, being deposited with the United States Postal Service with sufficient postage as first class mail, in an envelope addressed to the Commissioner of Patents and Trademarks, Washington, D.C. 20231 on MAY 23, 2002.


Suzanne M. Britt